
Mission 119 Ministries

DECONSTRUCTING CALVINISM
EPISODE 13: PILLAR PROOF TEXT
ACTS 13:48

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SERIES GOALS

- **Short, focused lessons**
 - **Explain Calvinism**
 - **Address claims of Calvinism**
 - **Exegetically**
 - **Historical**
 - **Philosophically**
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UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 27)

EPIISODE GOAL

- **Explain what Acts 13:48 is all about**
 - **The problem of proof-texting**
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THE PILLAR VERSE

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

- no decree in eternity past
 - does not say all who are ever saved were selected before creation
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“ORDAINED”

- The Greek term *tasso* translated "ordained" (KJV) is Strong No. 5021, which is defined in Strong's dictionary to mean "to arrange in an orderly manner, i.e., to assign or dispose."
 - BDAG gives the following primary definition: "to bring about an order of things by arranging, arrange, put in place." And of people, "of a person put into a specific position"
 - The word is used 7 other times in the New Testament and is translated as set (Luke 7:8), ordained (Romans 13:1), determined (Acts 15:2), appointed (Matthew 28:16; Acts 22:10, 28:23), and addicted (1 Corinthians 16:15). In each case, the word has the idea of arranging, appointing or preparing and in none of these seven verses is it related to eternal life.
 - Can mean "prepared for" or "put into position for"
 - God's Word translation: "The people who were not Jews were pleased with what they heard and praised the Lord's word. Everyone who had been prepared for everlasting life believed."
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CONTRASTING RESPONSES

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. **46** Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to [prepared for] eternal life believed.

THE ACTS 17 PARALLEL

- A parallel and nearly identical event is recorded in Acts 17 where Paul and Silas preached in a synagogue in Thessalonica. (Acts 17:1)
 - Many Jewish people and proselytes there believed (Acts 17:4), but those Jewish people that did not believe were jealous and caused an uproar in the city. (Acts 17:5-9, compare to Acts 13:45)
 - Paul and Silas left there to Berea, again preaching in a synagogue. (Acts 17:10)
 - And in contrast to the synagogue in Thessalonica, the Jewish people in the synagogue in Berea "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore, many of them believed." (Acts 17:11-12)
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THE ACTS 17 PARALLEL

- The word "noble" (Greek *eugenes*) means noble-minded or open-minded.
 - BDAG states the primary definition of "being of high status, well-born, high-born," as in a literal noble, but a secondary meaning of "having the type of attitude ordinarily associated with well-bred persons, noble-minded, open-minded."
 - The latter captures Luke's point here. Even though many in Thessalonica believed, the Berean Jews were nevertheless of a more superior attitude and thus "received the word with all readiness of mind" with the result that "many of them believed."
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THE ACTS 17 PARALLEL

- The sense in which the Gentiles in Acts 13:48 were arranged or prepared for eternal life was in their receptivity or open-mindedness to God's Word, just like the Bereans of Acts 17.
 - If everyone who believes was decreed to do so, then
 - the contrast between those in Thessalonica (many of whom believed) and those more noble-minded in Berea would not make sense; and
 - Paul's comment in Acts 13:46 that the unbelieving Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life would be a ludicrous statement for Paul to make if he believed God had not decreed their eternal life
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FINAL REMARKS

- Both passages state that those receptive to God's Word, when they were provided additional revelation, believed it.
 - This does not mean God had no role in preparing their hearts, as other passages teach He does through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (e.g., John 16:7-11)
 - Acts 13 provides no supporting context for forcing unconditional election over the passage; we can readily see why Luke would contrast one group's receptivity to another group, but not why he would introduce unconditional election in passing without any explanatory comments or reference to it later in Acts with others.
 - Beware proof-texting; real Biblical interpretation requires the hard work of examining context, structure, flow of the argument
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